

PLACID CHELSEA.

[Continued from first page.]

\$55 (fifty-five dollars) per annum. It was voted in town meeting August 18, 1796, to raise fifty dollars to pay Stephen Buhonon for one acre of land on which to erect a court house and jail, said land lying east of and adjoining the common and south of the East Hill road; also voted to raise \$400 for building a jail in Chelsea, and the selectmen were authorized to conclude a bargain, which Reuben Hatch and three others had made with Elijah Hubbard, said jail to contain two apartments, one for criminals and one for debtors. The selectmen were authorized to raise by subscription any further sum necessary, to seat the town house and arrange it for the use of the courts if possible.

This was the year in which Chelsea became the county seat, 1796. The town voted one cent on a dollar of the grand list, payable in cash, rye, wheat or Indian corn, the price of the grain to be estimated by the selectmen. Voted October 4, 1799, that the selectmen prepare a petition to the Grand Assembly to grant a land tax of six cents on the acre, for the purpose of building a court house in Chelsea; voted to raise \$500 on a dollar of the grand list to defray town charges, payable in grain. The land tax for building the court house amounted to \$1,320; amount raised by subscription, \$615, making in all the sum of \$1,935.

Oliver Torrey proposed to build the court house for this sum and what might be raised in addition by subscription, and his offer was accepted. Voted, 1801, to divide the town into eleven school districts, and to raise by tax \$500 to build a grammar school in addition to what may be raised by subscription. At a special town meeting, October 8, 1811, it was voted that Samuel Hovey, Baptist, be considered the first settled minister in town, he having been settled over the Baptist society in 1798, and he was therefore voted to be entitled to the share of land provided in the charter.

At March meeting, 1844, voted that the use of intoxicating liquors as an ordinary beverage is injurious, and that the sale of it ought to be discouraged. On a vote to license or not to license, the vote stood: to license, 142; not to license, 257.

The temperance revival work of the Washingtonians was bearing fruit. At the March town meeting in 1862, it was voted to purchase a piece of land for a new cemetery and to sell at public auction lots, the avails of which were to be applied to the purchase. Much credit is due to Capt. W. H. H. Hall for the

probably as many houses occupied in town as ever before, but the families are smaller, there are more elderly and retired people, and fewer industries.

Chelsea was the paradise of the small farmer, but it is somewhat too broken and irregular to easily admit of the combining of farms and use of machinery. The valley of the branch is easy and fertile tillage land, and the pastures are exceptionally good and free from weeds. The soil seems to be fertile on the base of the hills, and even far up on their sides. During war times and the succeeding decade, handsome prices were realized on all farm produce, and sheep husbandry was especially profitable. Many young men with limited capital bought farm and stock during this period of inflation, and the contraction of prices swallowed up their earnings.

The creamery system and the separation, lifting household burdens, have come to stay.

Notwithstanding the present stagnation of business and the low prices, there is a feeling of encouragement. The creamery and the silo offer unbounded possibilities. Magnificent crops of corn are stacked on these warm, early hillsides and rich valleys. Chelsea still enjoys the prestige of being the shire town of Orange county, and the intellectual stimulus that comes from the association twice a year with such an able and acute class of men as the presiding judges and the bar of Orange county. The presence of jurors and clients and witnesses, and the trial of interesting cases, lends a peculiar piquancy to the sessions of the county court. Less frequent and lasting, but not less exciting, are the biennial sessions of the county convention, when the bashful aspirants for office are dragged before the public gaze by their zealous friends. These stirring scenes have exerted, and will continue to exert, a formative and stimulating influence on the youthful imagination.

Chelsea has produced, trained and sent forth an unusual number of able and distinguished men, especially in the legal profession. The brilliant sons of Harry Hale, Ex-Secretary W. F. Vilas of Wisconsin, Hon. John Young, a member of congress and governor of New York, elected over Silas Wright in 1846, United States Senator William Palmer, later of Danville, Thomas Scott Buckingham, a graduate of the U. V. M. and later a distinguished lawyer and judge in Minnesota, and his honored brother, President M. H. Buckingham of the U. V. M., a great teacher, are among those whom Chelsea has sent forth.

In addition to these, Chelsea has sent forth some dozen or fifteen ministers, and furnished nearly a score of ministers with wives. "But the good farmers, physicians, merchants, mechanics,

is an entire absence of any artificial distinction, and a spirit of good fellowship prevails.

This, with a bank, a weekly newspaper and two churches makes up the equipment of this desirable residence town.



ORANGE COUNTY COURT HOUSE.

CHELSEA--THE COUNTY SEAT.

BY HALE K. DARLING.

Although no son, daughter or inhabitant of Chelsea can find anything in the history of the town of which he or she need be ashamed, yet it cannot be claimed that its record as a town is any more honorable than that of scores of towns all about us. In fact our history is barren of many of the striking incidents that mark the settlement and early history of many towns in this state. We cannot boast of great priority of settlement, of Indian massacres, of British raids or of Councils of Safety. Neither does our entire history record any particular event of more than local importance.

Our history as a town is but the history of hundreds of other New England towns, settled by honest, hardy men and women and peopled by their descendants.

There is, however, one phase of Chelsea's past that has given to the town an importance and an influence more than local. I refer to its record as the shire town of Orange county. The design of the present sketch is to give a history of the town with sole reference to its position as the county seat, and the subject is one that would ordinarily admit of and demand extensive research and ample detail of narration. But the writer is confronted with two conditions tending to prevent either. One is the meagre results that can be obtained in searching for the earlier facts upon this subject, and the other is that drawback of prolix writers (and that frequent blessing to weary readers) commonly known as "lack of space." Although this purports to be a sketch of Chelsea, and not of the county generally, it seems necessary, in this connection, to refer briefly to some of the main features of the history of the courts for this section, prior to the selection of this town as the county seat.

From 1765 to 1770, the territory out of which Orange county was subsequently formed was included in the county of Albany (N. Y.), the county seat being the city of that name. From the fact of our extreme distance from the seat of justice, it may readily be imagined that litigants were not very numerous in this vicinity, and that the disputes of our people, if any they had, were settled in some other way than by the arbitration of judges and jurors.

In 1770, the county of Gloucester was established by the New York authorities, and included all the territory now within the limits of Orange county. Kingsland, now the town of Washington, was selected as the county seat, and the first session of court was held there May 29, 1770. There were present John Taplin, Samuel Sleeper and Thomas Sumner, as judges appointed by the governor of New York, and James Pennock, Abner Fowler and John Peters as "Justices of the Quorum." John Taplin, Jr., high sheriff, was also present.

No business appears to have been done at this term, and an adjournment was taken to Aug. 28, when the court again met at the same place. The only business it transacted at this time was the appointment of several constables and the adoption of the following order: "That the Plaintiff filing Declaration in the Clerk's office eight days before the courts should be a Barr to the Defendant's Pleading an Imparance." It does not appear where the clerk's office was, but those interested in the order probably knew.

The next session of the court was held Nov. 27, 1770. Eight actions appear upon the docket at that time, all of which were continued to the next term, and the court adjourned to the last Tuesday in February.

The record of the court which convened, or attempted to convene, Feb. 25, 1771, is of interest as illustrating not only the primitive condition of the country, but the perseverance and fidelity of the "court" under difficulties.

Kings Land and traveled until Knight there being no road and the Snow very Depe we traveled on Snow Shoes or Rackets on the 20th we traveled some ways and held a Council when it was concluded it was Best to open the Court as we saw No Line it was not

(known) whether in Kingsland or Not But we concluded we were farr in the woods we did not expect to see any house unless we marched three miles within Kingsland and no one lived there when the Court was ordered to be opened on the spot.

"Present John Taplin Judge
"John Peters of the Quor'm
"John Taplin Jun'r Sheriff
"All cases continued or adjourned over until next term.

"The Court, if one, adjourned over until the last Tuesday in May next." The feelings of the "Court" when it found itself floundering about in the Washington snowdrifts, can be readily imagined and appreciated by many members of the legal profession in our country, who have passed through the same experience themselves.

In 1772, the shire of Gloucester county was changed to Newbury, on account of the inconvenience attending the holding of the courts at Kingsland. Two more sessions of court were held at Kingsland, however, after the designation of Newbury as the county seat, the date of the last one being May 25, 1773. After that the courts for Gloucester county were held at Newbury.

I am unable to find much about the courts from 1773 to 1781. The last record of any court held by Judge John Taplin is Feb. 25, 1774, at which time a session was held at Newbury. Judge Taplin's sympathies were with the English, or at least he declined to take sides against the King, under whom he had held several offices, and he retired to Canada during the war. Whether any courts were held during this period, I am unable to say.

In 1781, Orange county was organized, and the first court for that county was held at Thetford on the second Tuesday of June in that year. Thus it will be seen that the "June Term" is an institution coeval with Orange county. At this session, Gen. Jacob Bayley was chief judge, assisted by two "side" judges, another institution that has come down to us from the olden time. I am informed that about this time the chief judge was designated by the irreverent as "Tom Judge," while his two worthy assistants were known as "Pumpkin Judges," doubtless from their supposed familiarity with agricultural pursuits.

The second session of Orange county court was held at Thetford in September, 1781, and the third at Orford, N. H., in December of the same year. At this time the towns of Haverhill, Piermont, Orford and Lyme were included in Orange county, under a temporary union of the towns in New Hampshire, bordering on the Connecticut river, with the government of Vermont.

Chester became the shire town of Orange county in 1796, and the courts for this county have been held here continuously ever since, although numerous efforts have been made to locate the seat elsewhere.

County Court.

The first session of the county court held here was the December term, 1796, of the county court. The following is a copy of the first page of the docket for that term:

STATE OF VERMONT, SS.

At a County Court holden at Chelsea within and for the County of Orange on the Monday next preceding the second Tuesday of December (being the 12th day) In the year of our Lord one thousand Seven hundred and Ninety Six

Present

The Honbl. Cornelius Lynde Esquire Chief Judge
The Honbl. Beriah Loomis } Side or
and Elisha Allis Esquires } assistant Judges
Josiah Edson Esqr of Randolph Sheriff
Isaac Bailey Esquire of Newbury Clerk.



ORANGE COUNTY HOTEL.

We give it entire and commend it to the attention of those who consider it a great hardship to be obliged to travel fifteen or twenty miles, over good roads, to attend our December term of court: Feb'y 25th Sat out from Moore-

The Court was opened on Monday the 12 of Decr. 1796 and adjourned till Tuesday the 13 Inst at 9 o'clock in the forenoon when it was opened and continued to set from Day to Day till Saturday the 17, and then adjourned till

M and then opened and continued setting till Tuesday noon the 20, when it was adjourned without day.

Atts L. Bayley Clk

The docket for this term contained 154 old entries and 134 new entries, of which seven were tried by jury. The first case tried by jury in Chelsea was the suit of Asahel Chamberlin of Stratford against Jonathan Barrett of Norwich, an action of assumpsit. The record informs us that in 1790 Jonathan borrowed two large potash kettles of Asahel, recklessly promising, as neighbors will, to return them shortly in good order. But instead of doing so, he broke and destroyed them, and then, neighbor-like, refused to pay Asahel anything for them. Asahel was represented by J. P. Buckingham, afterwards chief judge of this court, while Jonathan's interests were looked after by Ebenezer Brown of Norwich. The case was tried Dec. 13, 1796, and the jury, of which Frederick Mann was foreman, rendered a verdict for the plaintiff for \$23.49 and costs. Jonathan appealed to the supreme court.

At this session, Major Reuben Hatch of Chelsea was appointed county treasurer, and it is also recorded that Elijah Hurlburt of Stratford was licensed to keep a tavern in Chelsea until the next June term, and that David Crocker of Chelsea became his bondsman in the sum of \$300. Some other business of minor importance was transacted, and, as the docket entry above given states, the court adjourned Dec. 20. As the December term, 1896, will be the "Centennial" of this town's history as the county seat, it is to be hoped that the bar of Orange county will take some action respecting a suitable commemoration of the occasion.

"The Honbl. Cornelius Lynde Esquire" continued to be chief judge until 1799, the June term of that year marking the conclusion of his term. Assistant Judges Loomis and Allis, however, continued in office for some time longer. Judge Lynde was the fourth in order of the chief judges of Orange county, and, as his name would indicate, was a resident of Williams-town. Though not a lawyer, he was evidently a man of considerable culture for the times in which he lived. He was a student in Harvard college at the outbreak of the Revolution, leaving college to enter the patriot army, in which he rose to the rank of major. He died in 1836.

His successor was Jedediah Parker Buckingham of Thetford, who enjoys the distinction of being the first lawyer to hold the position of chief judge of Orange county court. He held his first term in December, 1799. An inspection of previous dockets shows that he had a large practice before his elevation to the bench. He served as chief

judge until the June term of 1806, and again from 1813 to 1815. We infer that Judge Buckingham believed in retrenchment, for we find in the record of his first term that he caused an order to be made "that the high sheriff be allowed to have two deputies to attend each county court hereafter, and no more."

In this same volume of records, the writer found a letter, evidently placed there as a bookmark, which indicates that the prohibition sentiment in this vicinity was not so strong in those days as now. The letter is addressed to the clerk and signed by Judges Buckingham and Loomis. It reads:

"We recollect that at December term last, we assessed Joel Hatch and Amplus Blake, both of Stratford, the sum of five dollars each, for a license to sell foreign distilled spirits at their several stores in Stratford, and also each the sum of one dollar and fifty cents for wines. If they have paid you this sum with costs, they are entitled to their licenses to bear date from sd. term, or on paying the same, think they are entitled to it."

At the December term, 1802, Assistant Judge Allis was succeeded by James Fisk of Barre, which town was then included in Orange county. Judge Fisk held this office but one year, and was succeeded in 1803 by Moulton Morey, a Fairlee lawyer, and near kinsman to Samuel Morey, the steamboat inventor. Judge Morey became chief judge in 1806, succeeding Judge Buckingham. Judge Tarbox became assistant judge in place of Judge Morey, while Beriah Loomis still continued as the other assistant. This arrangement lasted until the December term of 1809, when James Fisk appears as chief judge, similarly "assisted." Judge Fisk was probably the ablest man who ever held the office of chief judge of Orange county. For four years previous to holding that office, he was a member of congress, and on his retirement from the judgeship in 1810 he was again elected to congress, serving until 1815, when he became a judge of the supreme court, holding that office two years. He was United States senator in 1817-18, and resigned to accept the collectorship of Vermont, which office he held for eight years. He was a Democrat in politics.

Elisha Hotchkiss of Chelsea, a graduate of Dartmouth and a practicing lawyer, was the next chief judge, holding that office from the December term, 1810, to and including the June term, 1812. Judges Loomis and Tarbox "sided" with him during his term. Judge Hotchkiss was an influential citizen in 1807, 1811, 1812 and 1813. His judicial successor was Daniel Pease of Washington (father of Mrs. B. F. Dickinson), who was chief judge for one year. So far as the records show, he was not present at either of the terms of court held during his incumbency of that office. The assistant judges at this time were Josiah Dana of Chelsea and John H. Cotton of Bradford, and they, it seems, conducted the sessions without the presence of their chief, who was, no doubt, engrossed in his business at Washington, where he kept both a store and tavern.

At the December term, 1813, Judge Buckingham again appears as chief judge, and Beriah Loomis, who was dropped off the bench in 1812 after a continuous service of sixteen years, reappears as assistant judge, the other one being Judge Cotton.

In 1816, Josiah Dana of Chelsea became chief judge, serving until 1820. Judge Dana was a prominent and influential citizen of Chelsea and had previously served as town representative, assistant judge and county auditor and treasurer. He was a presidential elector on the Adams ticket in 1828 and a member of the governor's council in 1821 and 1826. His granddaughter, Mrs. Caroline Dana Uhl, now resides at Yonkers, N. Y., and recently paid a visit to Chelsea.

The last chief judge of Orange county court was William Spencer of Corinth, who served from 1820 to 1825, when the office was abolished and the present system of assigning the supreme court judges to reside at the county courts adopted. The "side-wheel" feature of the county bench was not abolished, however, and the custom of having two practical men of affairs to assist the presiding judge and to attend to the miscellaneous county business continues to this day, with the merit of age, at least, in its favor.

Judge Spencer presided for the last time at the June term, 1825. At the December term of that year, Tims Hutchinson, then second associate justice of the supreme court and subsequently its chief, presided. The following is a list of the presiding judges of this court from 1826 to the present time. The abbreviation "J" indicates the June term, and "D" the December term:

1826 and 1827, (J) Samuel Prentiss; (D) Tims Hutchinson. 1828, Samuel Prentiss. 1828, (J) Samuel Prentiss; (D) Tims Hutchinson. 1830, Tims Hutchinson. 1831, (J) Tims Hutchinson; (D) Nicholas Baylies. 1832, Tims Hutchinson. 1833, (J) Tims Hutchinson; (D) John Mattocks. 1834, (J) John Mattocks; (D) Jacob Collamer. 1835-42, Jacob Collamer. 1843 and 1844, (J) Milo L. Bennett; (D) William Hebard. 1845, (J) William Hebard; (D)



Residence of Capt. W. H. H. Hall as Decorated For Centennial, 1884.

Daniel Kellogg. 1846, (J) Daniel Kellogg; (D) Isaac F. Redfield. 1847, (J) Hiland Hall; (D) Isaac F. Redfield. 1848-49, Isaac F. Redfield. 1850, Jacob Collamer.

In 1850 the time of holding the winter term of court was changed from December to January. The courts from and including the January term, 1851, to and including the June term, 1851, were held by Judge Collamer, with the exception of the June term, 1852, which was held by Luke P. Poland. From the January term, 1855, to the June term, 57 inclusive, Abel Underwood presided, except at the June term of 1855, which Judge Poland held. Beginning with the January term, 1858, Judge Barrett was presiding judge of this court until the January term, 1861, at which time Asahel Peck began his long period of service as our presiding judge, continuing as such to and including the June term of 1874, with the single exception of the December term, 1870, which was presided over by Jonathan Ross, now chief judge of the supreme court and at one time principal of Chelsea academy. In 1867, the old arrangement of June and December terms was adopted and has continued until the present time. Since Judge Peck's retirement from the bench, our presiding judges have been as follows:

1874, (D) Timothy P. Redfield. 1875, H. Henry Powers. 1876, (J) H. Henry Powers; (D) Timothy P. Redfield. 1877, H. Henry Powers. 1878, (J) H. Henry Powers; (D) Timothy P. Redfield. 1879-81, H. Henry Powers. 1882-85, John W. Rowell. 1886, (J) John W. Rowell; (D) William H. Walker. 1887, (J) Homer E. Royce; (D) Jonathan Ross. 1888, (J) H. Henry Powers; (D) Wheelock G. Veazey. 1889, (J) Russell S. Taft; (D) John W. Rowell. 1890, (J) James M. Tyler; (D) Jonathan Ross. 1891, (J) Russell S. Taft; (D) John W. Rowell. 1892, (J) James M. Tyler; (D) Loveland Munson. 1893, (J) Henry R. Start; (D) Laforrest H. Thompson. 1894, (J) Jonathan Ross; (D) Russell S. Taft. 1895, (J) John W. Rowell.

Thus it will be seen that since the county court began its sessions in Chelsea, 35 different persons have presided over it. Judge Peck held twenty-six terms here, and Judge Collamer twenty-four.

Within the memory of many now at the bar, the customs of the court have undergone a radical change. There is now much less of outward pomp but not less of real dignity, than in the olden times. In former days the judges were escorted to the court house by the high sheriff, who, with sword aloft



ALDEN SPEARE PUBLIC LIBRARY AND TOWN HALL.

faithful manner in which this trust has been executed. A handsome gateway and a tomb have been constructed and many imposing monuments of Barre granite erected.

We have given extended space to these public records, believing that the general reader would be much more interested in reading the record itself than in any comments that could be offered.

They are the stones which mark the onward and upward progress of an energetic, public-spirited community, and from them we may gather many a lesson of patience and wisdom. May we turn from a contemplation of their heroic efforts and adverse conditions with a more steadfast courage and a higher resolve to "act well our part, there all the honor lies."

Modern Chelsea.

Chelsea had a population of 239 at the first census taken in 1791; nine years later it had bounded up to 908. The next decade, the first as shire town, marks an increase of almost one-half, reaching 1,327. In 1830 it was 1,958 and in 1850, 1,958 and in 1890, 1,230.

It will seem that there was a rapid increase until 1830, that for the ensuing twenty years it reached the zenith of prosperity in wealth and population, and since that time there has been a gradual decline. A variety of causes has combined to produce this result.

From the building of the Central Vermont railroad to South Royalton in 1848, and the advent of the Passumpsic up the Connecticut, the decadence began. Much business, of which Chelsea was the natural center, became diverted to Bradford, Randolph and Royalton. The tannery, the cloth dressing and fulfilling mill, the boot and shoe maker's shop and many other infant industries of the formative period have disappeared under the iron heel of modern competition. Discriminating freight rates favoring large business centers, the discovery of new methods, and the application of new and costly machinery involving a concentration of capital, have displaced the once thriving industries of the smaller and more distant villages. To supply this loss is the problem of the day. A railroad to South Royalton, rendering available the splendid granite resources of the town, would be a long step in that direction.

The churches, the schoolhouses, excellent roads and bridges, houses and barns, as well as the water power and capital are all here, and it needs only some active manufacturing industry to

teachers, lawyers, editors, presidents and professors in colleges, and bankers that the town has sent out over the land, who can number them or estimate their influence?" Others equally brave and able have remained, preferring to enjoy the pleasing associations of youth in the native field. Of such we may mention Lieut. Governors Martin and Hinkley, Hon. D. A. A. Buck and Wm. Hebard, members of congress, and hosts of others less favored by opportunity.

Chelsea is twenty-two miles south of Montpelier, the nearest railroad station on the north being Williamstown and the nearest station on the south, South Royalton, which is thirteen miles distant on the C. V. R. R., and to which daily stages are run. Chelsea village is pleasantly located in the valley at the first branch of the White River, that, in the center of the village, widens out to a broad meadow. It contains a single street, extending up the valley nearly a mile, and near the center, several intersecting avenues, with two fine public squares, bordered with trees.

The Orange county court house faces the south common on the west and the Congregational church on the east. The first court house was erected in 1796, and was located on Main street. This gave place to a more commodious structure at the head of south common in 1801, and in 1847 the present building at the east end of south park.

The village contains a national bank, two churches (Congregational and Methodist), the Orange county hotel, Chelsea academy, three general stores, one drug store, two groceries, two furniture and undertaking establishments, a hardware store, a jewelry store, a boot and shoe store, a flouring mill, a saw mill, a repair shop, two blacksmith shops, two livery stables, a dentist, three lawyers and four physicians.

The two parks, with their borders of verdant foliage, are remarkable and attractive features of this village of homes. The village is protected from winds by hills rising from the river valley on all sides, except the south, which offers a pleasant outlook. Pleasant drives in every direction disclose rare views of varied scenic beauty, and the village only needs to become better known to attract many summer guests within its borders. The hotel and livery accommodations are complete. The Boston dailies are at hand on the nightly stage at 6 o'clock. The elegant new library and reading room is supplied with the best current reviews and magazines and a choice and extensive selection of standard literature.

Many of the residents of the town are